



# LEADERSHIP

## ENHANCING HUMAN CAPITAL







Col Jeffrey Smith, PhD.

# LEADERS...

- Set the tone
- Set the example
- Set the expectations
- Set the priorities
- Hold the first line of UCMJ
- Hold the power to start or stop careers
- Have the potential for influence

Effective leadership is the single most important element for our Airmen, for our culture, and for the future of our service

# PERSPECTIVE ACROSS THE FORCE...\*

-  % say “The Air Force is just a job”
-  % say “if I could get out now I would”
-  % say “the Air Force only talks about taking care of people”
-  % say “my boss mandates rather than coordinates”
-  % say, “I have never had a mentor”
-  % say, “I doubt my leadership even knows my name”

# PROFESSIONALISM?

- What is it?
  - Often described as the process of leading oneself. It is committing to personal behavior that exemplifies the institutional standards and is usually accompanied by an oath to a specific code of behavior or conduct.
  - It is a mindset and a commitment that seeks to bring out the best in ourselves and in all those around us. It is a shared trust between ourselves and others to adhere to the defined standards of the organization.



# PROFESSIONALISM

That's not my job.



# PROFESSION OF ARMS...?

- What is it?
  - A military institution that shares, agrees to, and holds members accountable to clear standards of behavior as it seeks to meet national security objectives
  - A military organization that prepares for and presents the controlled use of violence by members who swear allegiance to a specific code of conduct
  - Refers to the military as a unique and specific calling characterized by trust, commitment, loyalty, and dignity

# PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT...?

- What is it?
  - It is the deliberate effort of infusing “professionalism” in development.
  - In action, it is the process of combining one’s understanding and loyalty to the values, standards, and principles required within the profession of arms across all development (education, training, experience).

# OWNERSHIP

Professionalism ↔ Profession of Arms

**Air Force Leaders**

Professional Development

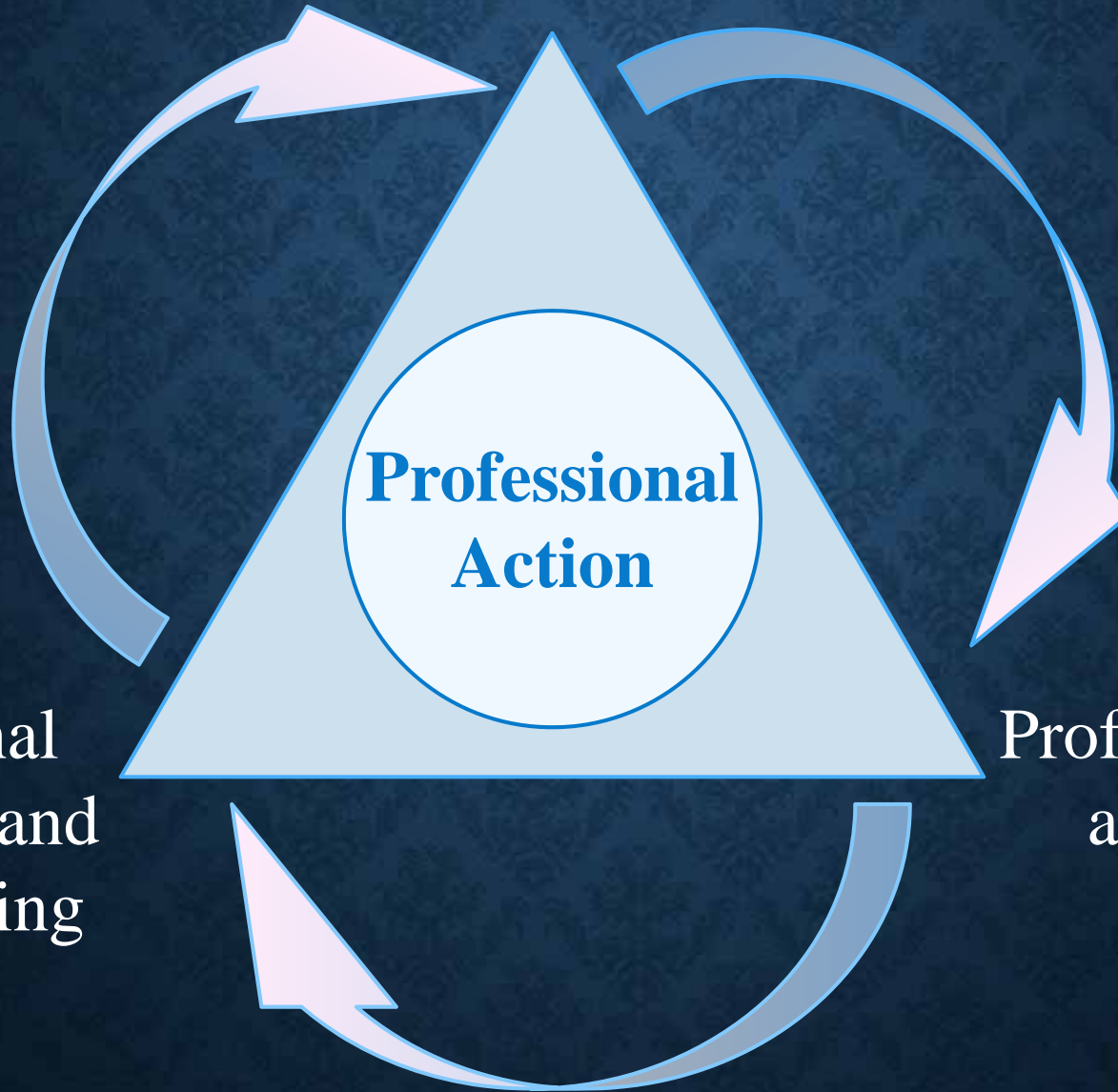


Professional values and  
personal commitment

**Professional  
Action**

Professional  
knowledge and  
understanding

Professional skills  
and abilities



# **BEING A PROFESSIONAL**

Why would someone want to be a professional?

- People want to be part of something bigger/better than themselves
- Humans seek “in-groups” for which they can be a part in order to define a personal identity and have a sense of “belonging”
- Most humans require a level of predictability and voluntarily seek standards of conduct in order to better deal with life’s daily realities and challenges

Don't mistake this fake smile  
and professional body  
language.

I'd punch you in the throat  
if I knew I wouldn't lose my  
job.



# HUMAN BEHAVIOR...

We can trust that people will do what they perceive is in their best interest to do

- Leaders must shape their people's perspective such that what those people perceive to be in their best interest is equally in the best interest of the organization

- This requires a better understanding of the human phenomenon

- Understanding the human phenomenon requires tough habits of thought

- Tough habits of thought requires becoming better critical thinkers and effective communicators



# MANAGING HUMAN CAPITAL

- For the leader, it begins with our own professional development
  - Cannot give to someone else something we do not have
  - In large part, our people reflect our example
- If we want to professionally develop our people we must start by understanding them better
  - POS: Need for respect, belonging, optimism, opportunity
  - NEG: Bias, in-groups, entrenched thinking, misperceptions

EFFECTIVELY MANAGING HUMAN CAPITAL  
REQUIRES LEADERS WHO ARE HIGHLY SKILLED  
THINKERS AND COMMUNICATORS

# MANAGING HUMAN CAPITAL

Critical Thinking and Effective Communication  
are the foundation from which all leadership  
relationships must be based.

It starts by actively, creatively, and systematically  
thinking through the art of the possible regarding how  
you can influence our people...

...it is accomplished by taking that thinking into action  
through effectively communicating both your intent  
and your interest in their lives.



# LEADERSHIP

ENHANCING HUMAN CAPITAL

Critical Thinking and Effective Communication Part I

# THE HUMAN PHENOMENON

- Everyone has a brain...
- Everyone has personal experiences...
- Everyone has a perspective...
- Everyone has a unique way of thinking...

**Everyone has the ability to recognize and  
shape his/her own way of thinking...**



# Enhancing Human Capital...

It starts with the leader

## Critical Thinking

- Theory and Definition
- Context
- Bias and Perspective

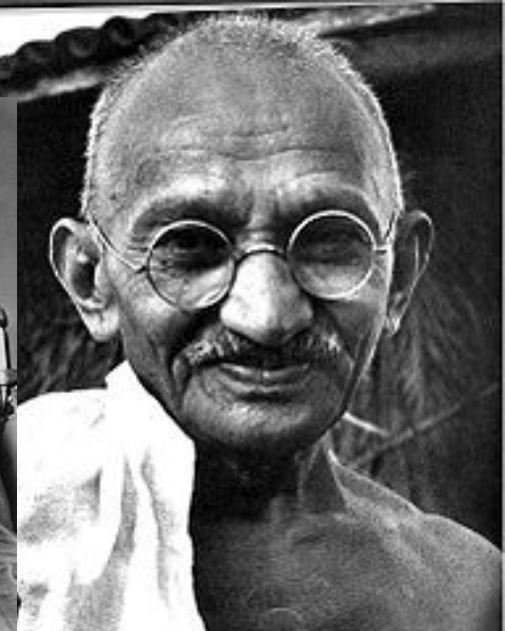
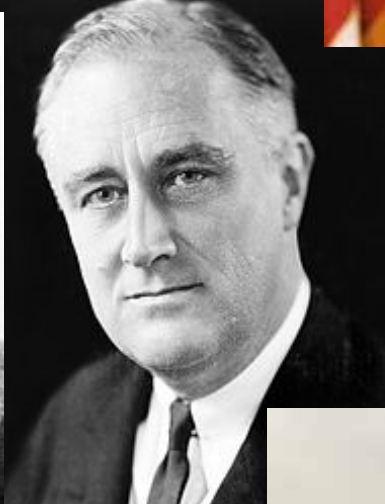
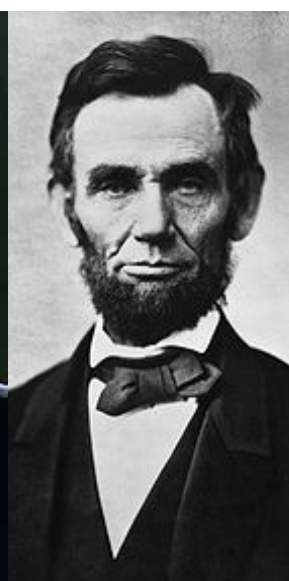
## Effective Communication

- Productive Dialogue
- Persuasion and Influence

# WHY IS CTEC IMPORTANT?

- Unintended consequences are often caused by failed or incomplete thinking
- Military organizations must anticipate 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> order effects which requires tough habits of thought
- Humans make decisions based on how they think... change their thinking, you change their decisions
- How one thinks is often based on one's perceptions (misperceptions)...perceptions are shapeable
- True leadership is the art of influencing behavior to a pre-determined outcome (behavior)
- **The Profession of Arms requires it!**





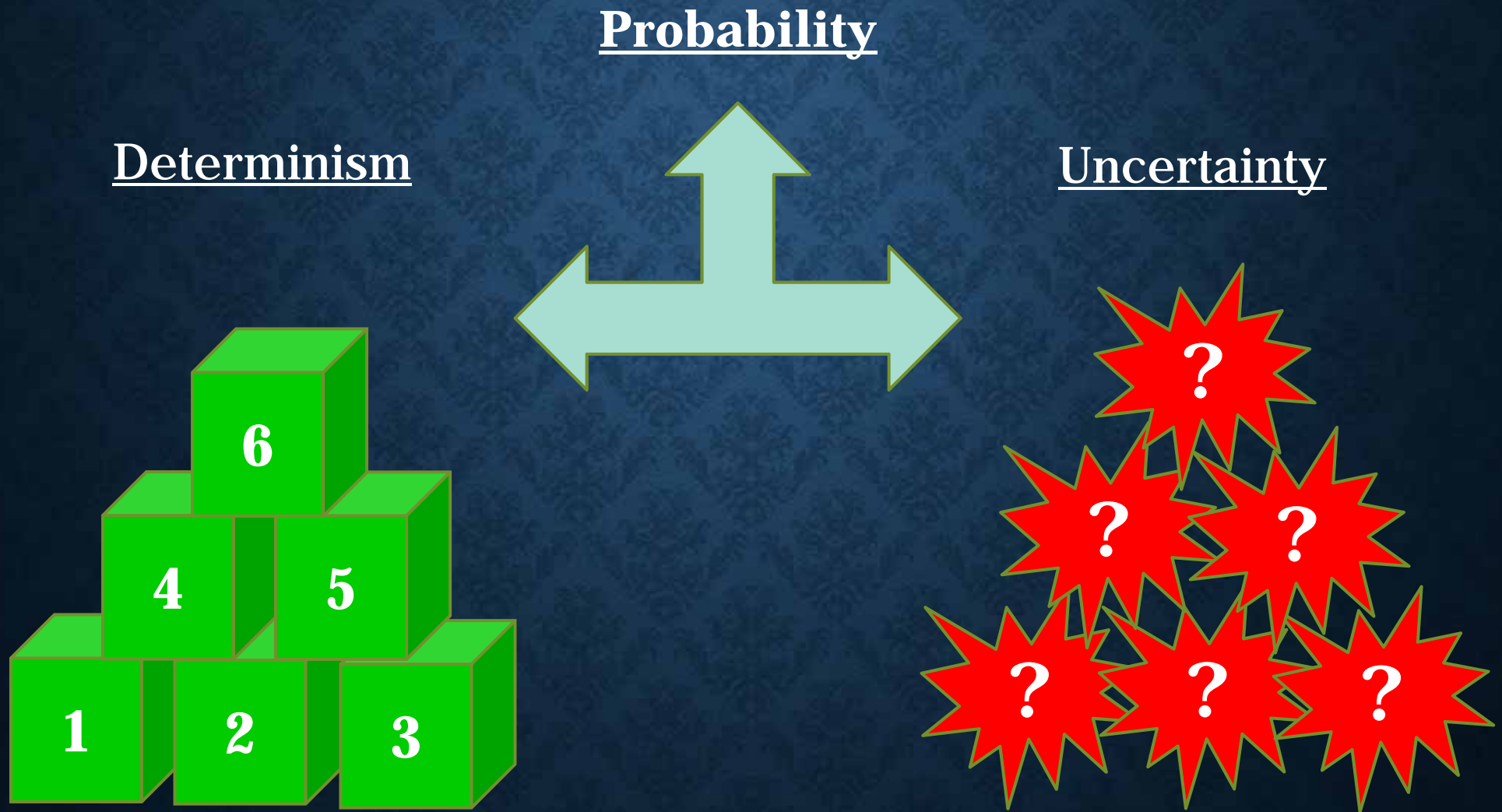
# TOUGH HABITS OF THOUGHT....

Finding the occasional straw of truth awash in a great ocean of confusion and bamboozle requires intelligence, vigilance, dedication, and courage. But if we don't practice these tough habits of thought, we cannot hope to solve the truly serious problems that face us...and we risk becoming a nation of suckers up for grabs by the next charlatan that comes along.

*Carl Sagan*



# BRIDGING THE THINKING PARADOX



# CRITICAL THINKING...A PROCESS!

“Critical Thinking is a process of intellectual analysis that takes into account complexities not normally considered and often overlooked in order to better anticipate 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> order effects.”

# A STRATEGIC LEADER...

Systematic Thinking

Creative  
Thinking

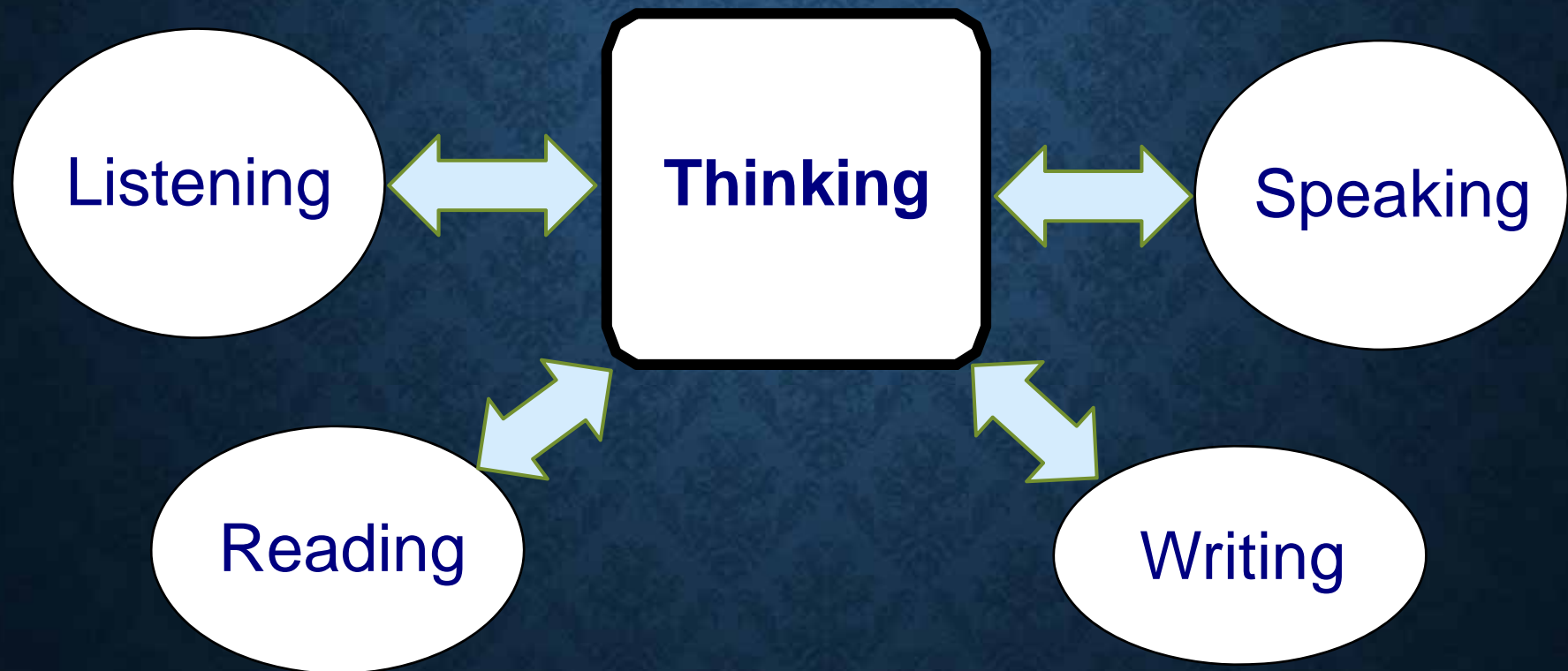
Thinking  
In Time

Critical  
Thinking

Ethical  
Thinking

**THINKING**

# CRITICAL THINKING





# SYSTEMATIC THINKING



**A thoughtful, systematic process can lead folks to a common and coordinated end-state regardless of how difficult the puzzle may seem...**

**However, sometimes, our systematic approach to decision making, even in what appears to be a simple process, does not lead to a common solution set...**

...Soldiers possessed no means of analyzing facts; they saw things as cows see them, and they were unable to work scientifically.

...Unless the student finds interest and is possessed with curiosity he will never observe. He will simply see things as a cow sees them, and, whatever grade he holds as a soldier, he will be but a military cow...

*JFC Fuller*

# BIAS AND PERSPECTIVE

We adopt rules of thumb and take short cuts when making choices

Confirmation

Sunk Cost

Anchoring

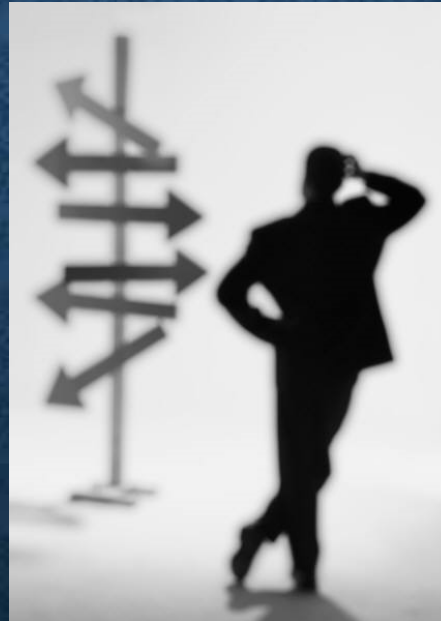
Status Quo

Overconfidence

Recallability

Hindsight

Framing

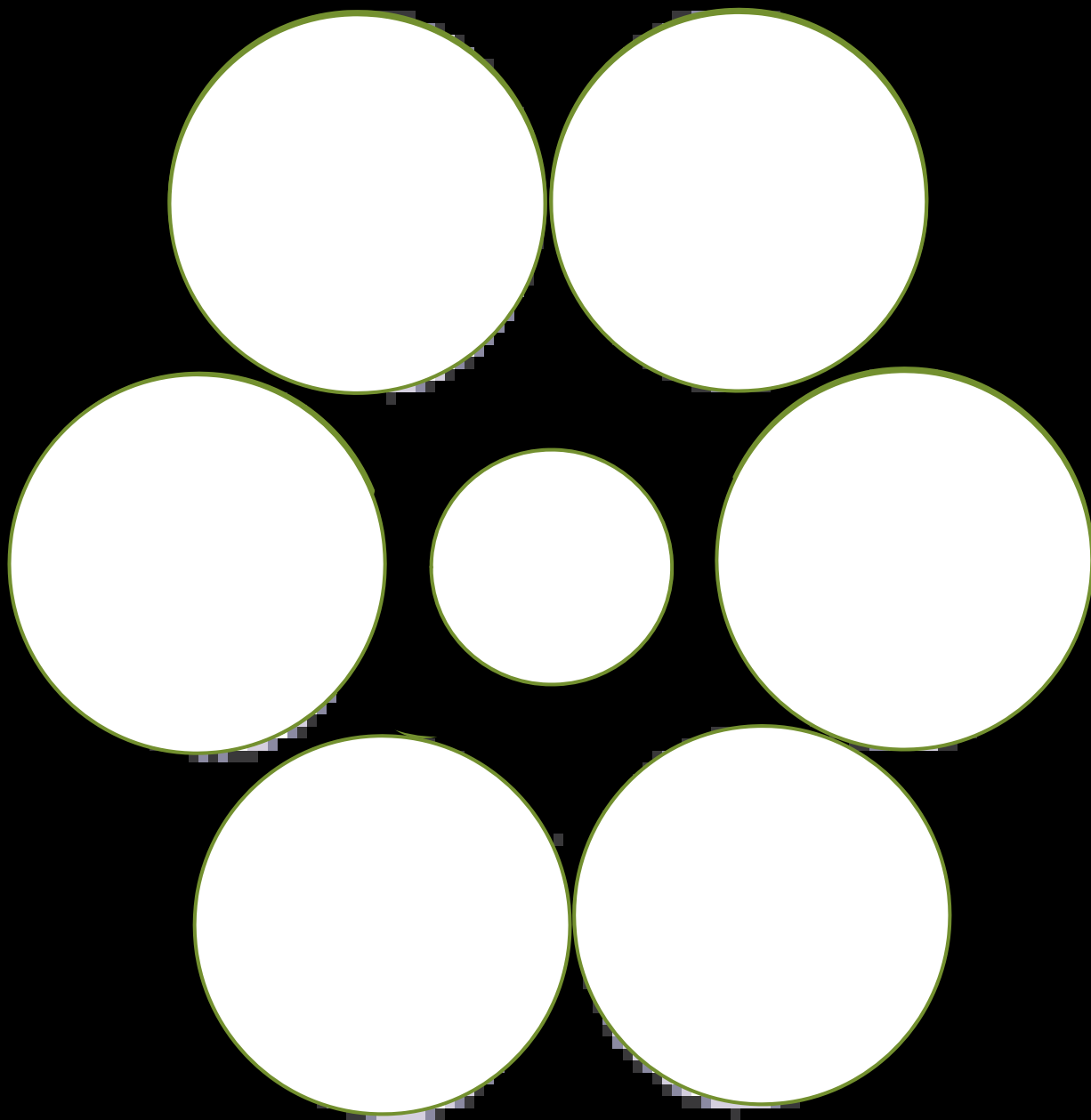
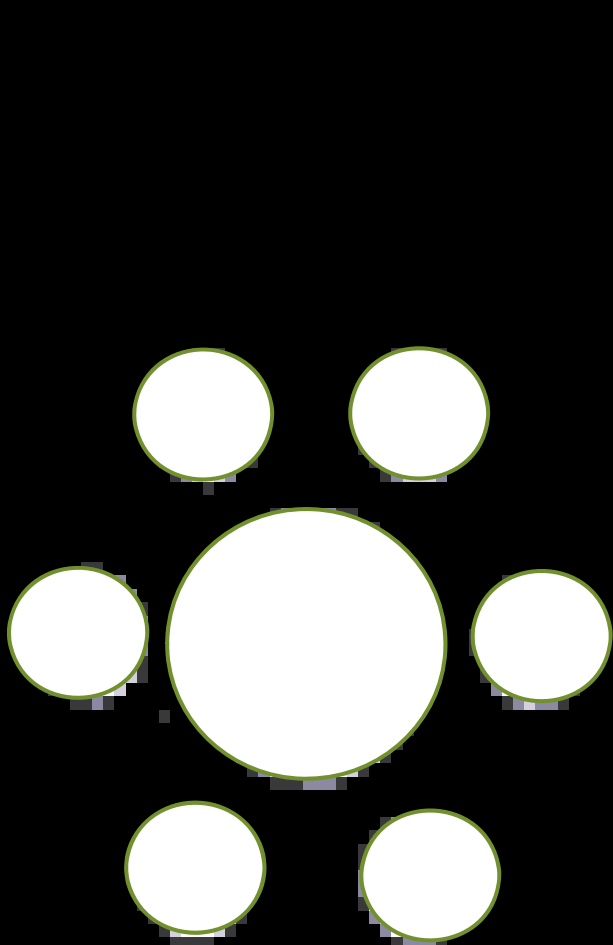




# CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS...

The single most destructive  
roadblock in our becoming an  
effective critical thinker is  
our own personal bias...





# **BIAS AND PERSPECTIVE**

## **Ethnocentric Bias...**

- Tendency to place one's culture, nation & religion above all others
- Tendency to select self-serving positive descriptions of ourselves and negative descriptions of those who think differently from us
- Failure to study and internalize insights from other cultures
- Failure to realize that mass media shapes the news from the point of view of that culture
- Failure to think historically and anthropologically
- Absolutes considered universal regardless of different context

## **CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS...**

The single most destructive roadblock in our becoming an effective critical thinker is our own personal bias...

...These are often called personal “blind spots”

# BIAS AND PERSPECTIVE

Optimist

-v-

Pessimist

Liberalism

-v-

Extrovert

-v-

Introvert

Religious

-v-

Agnostic

Everybody has  
a story...

Stable

-v-

Unstable

Republican

-v-

Democrat

Passivist

-v-

Activist

Liberal

-v-

Conservative



# **IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS FOR DEVELOPING CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS...**

- Rarely expect or seek absolutes
- Question your own beliefs and bias
- Ponder more, talk less...
- Ask yourself, “What am I missing?”
- Try assuming you are wrong
- Focus beyond the obvious
- Always seek alternatives



# LEADERSHIP

ENHANCING HUMAN CAPITAL

(Critical Thinking and Effective Communication Part II)

# TWO SIDED COIN...

**Critical  
Thinking**



**Effective  
Communication**

# **Destructive Effective Communication... Communication...**

## **Military Leaders**

**Strategy**

**Leadership**

**Doctrine**

**Joint  
Coordination**

**Coalitions**

**International  
Relations**

**Partnership  
Capacity**

## **Leaders Interaction:**

- **Debates**
- **Arguments**
- **Dialogue**



# PRODUCTIVE DIALOGUE

## Be a critic, not a cynic

**Critical** discussion is a sign of personal and professional reflection.

**Cynical** discussion is a sign of personal frustration and weakness.

## Express honest and sincere appreciation

Caution: inappropriate flattery may later cost you credibility

## Lead others to “discover” your point of view

The art of “verbal maneuver” requires shaping your argument to meet the needs of those you wish to influence in such a way as to allow them room for “personal discovery.”

The best group solutions are “organically derived”  
rather than mandated.

**“Never tell people how to do things.  
Tell them what to do and they will  
surprise you with their ingenuity.”**

*~Gen George Patton*



# I'M SORRY

I can't hear you over the sound of how awesome I am.

# PRODUCTIVE DIALOGUE

**Be genuinely interested in other people  
and their opinions**

*When someone is giving their input, do not be sidetracked by the  
mental development of your next comment...*

*Instead, listen with the intent of paraphrasing back to them an  
acknowledgment of what they are saying...try it.*

*Ask several questions focused directly on the person's position...even  
if you think you already understand his/her position (critical  
questions, not cynical questions)*



# PRODUCTIVE DIALOGUE

## Listen to first hand experience

*People like to talk about themselves and share their experiences.*

*When discussing an event or a puzzle that requires an eventual decision point, ask others about their specific experiences.*

*Not only will you gain empirical knowledge,  
but you will strengthen that person's commitment to the process.*

## Encourage others to offer their “ideas” not just the facts

*The art of developing solutions requires  
the amalgamation of “ideas” with facts.*

*Ideas are the offspring of critical thinking.*

# PRODUCTIVE DIALOGUE

- Be a critic, not a cynic
- Express honest and sincere appreciation
- Lead others to “discover” for themselves your point of view
- Be genuinely interested in other people and their opinions
- Listen to first hand experience
- Encourage others to share their “ideas” not just the facts

# ***CONSIDERATIONS...***

- The only way to get the best of an angry argument is to avoid it
- Do not be ill tempered or mean spirited in your debate
- Be very careful telling someone they are “Wrong”
- If you are wrong, admit it quickly and emphatically
- Try honestly to see things from the other person’s point of view
- Appropriately hold others accountable for their perspectives
- Play “Devils Advocate” to challenge, not to frustrate
- The louder you talk the more defensive people will become



# WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THIS?

*only*

The trouble with most people is that they think with  
their hopes or fears or wishes rather than with  
their minds.

~Will Durant



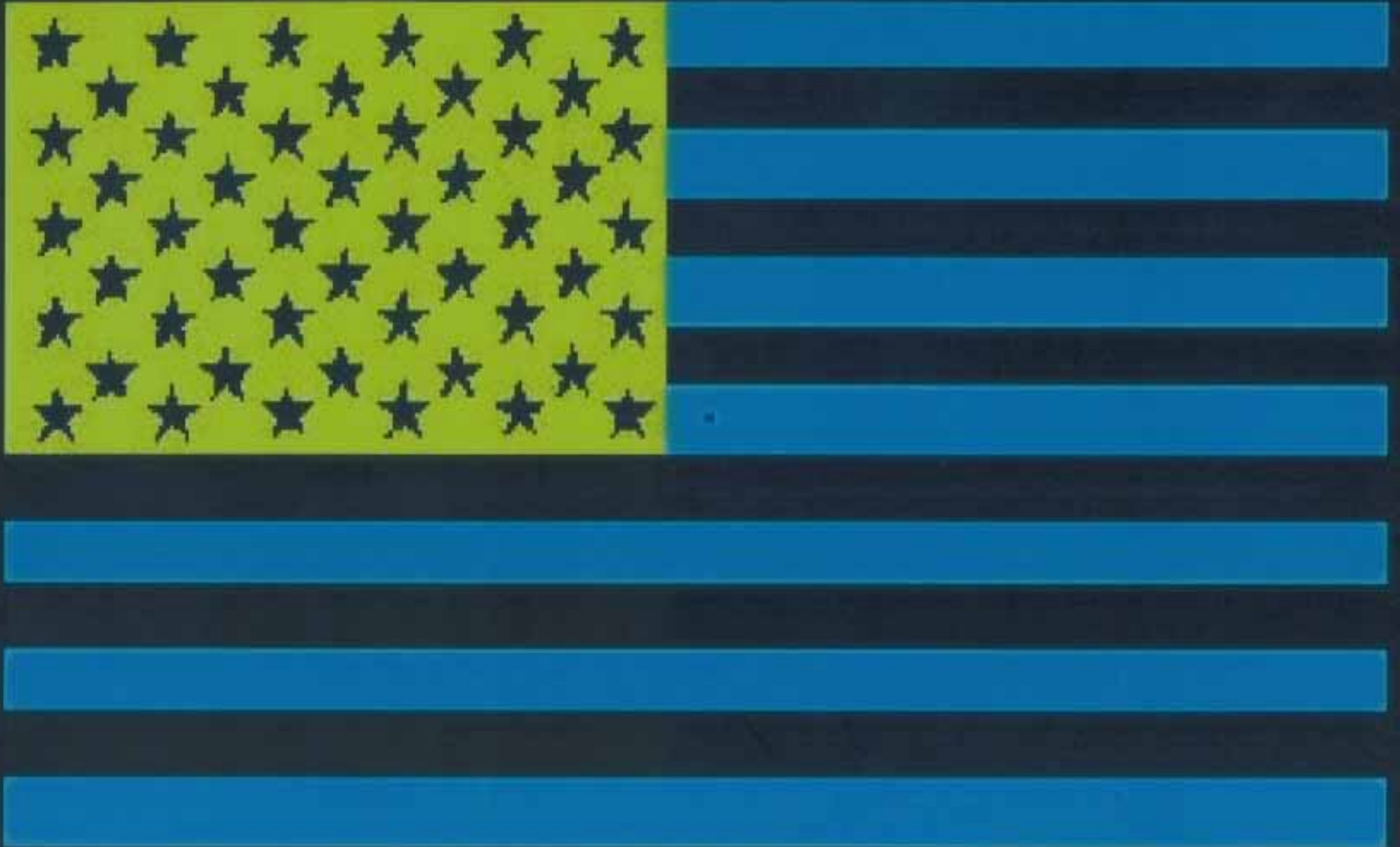
# BARRIERS...

- What are some of the barriers to critical thinking and effective communication?
  - Personal Bias
  - Mental Entrenchment
  - Ethnocentric perspectives
  - Closed Mind
  - Conceit
  - Fear

# PHYSIOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

- What “physical” realities must be considered regarding the human brain?
  - Are there “hard-wired” issues that must be considered?
    - IQ
    - Experiences
    - Disabilities
    - Physical damage

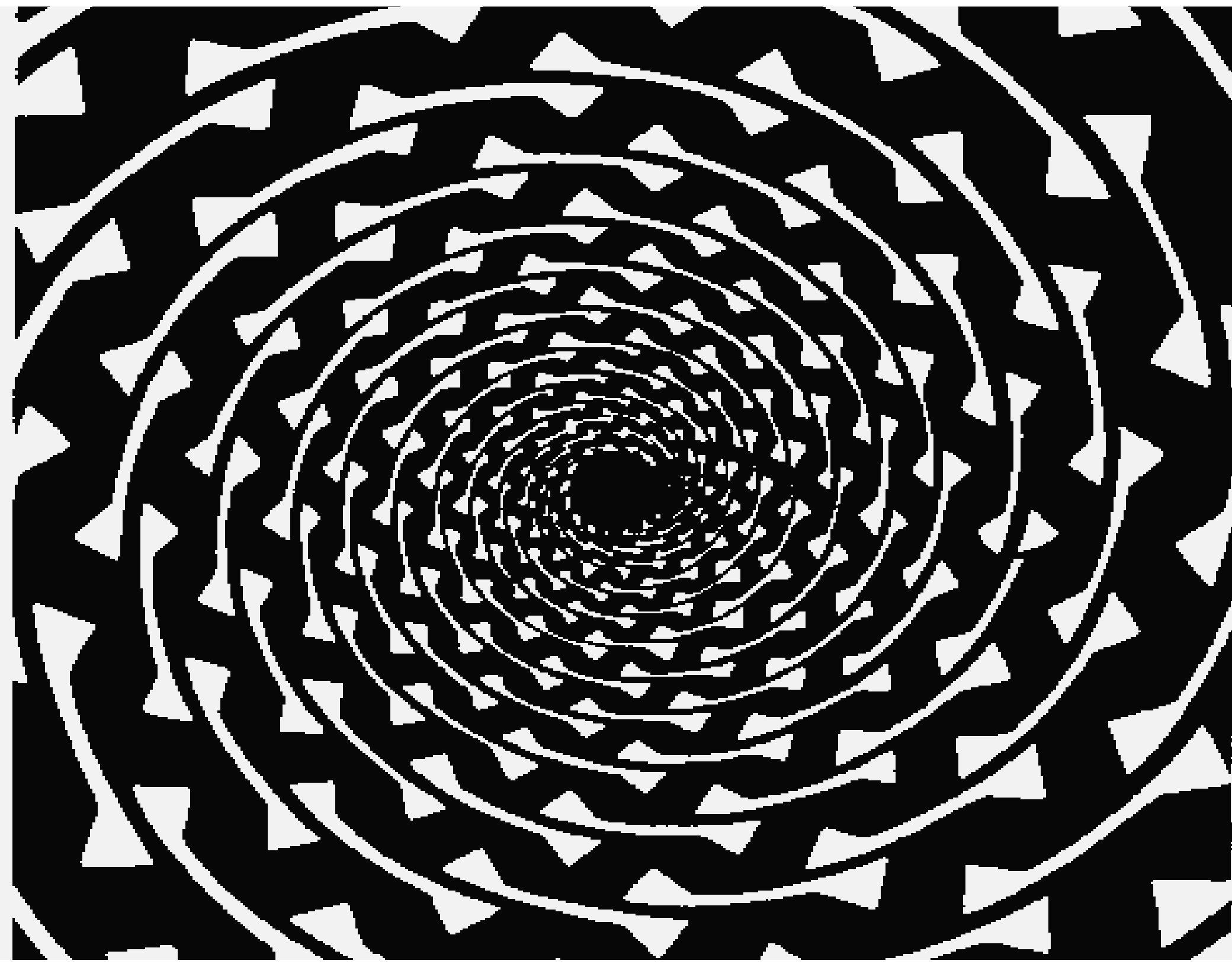
# WHAT DOES OUR MIND SEE?



# CONFLICTING INFORMATION

- How do we deal with conflicting information when making a decision?
  - Confusion
  - Frustration
  - Anger
  - Disregard
  - Belittle









# McGurk Effect



# THINKING...

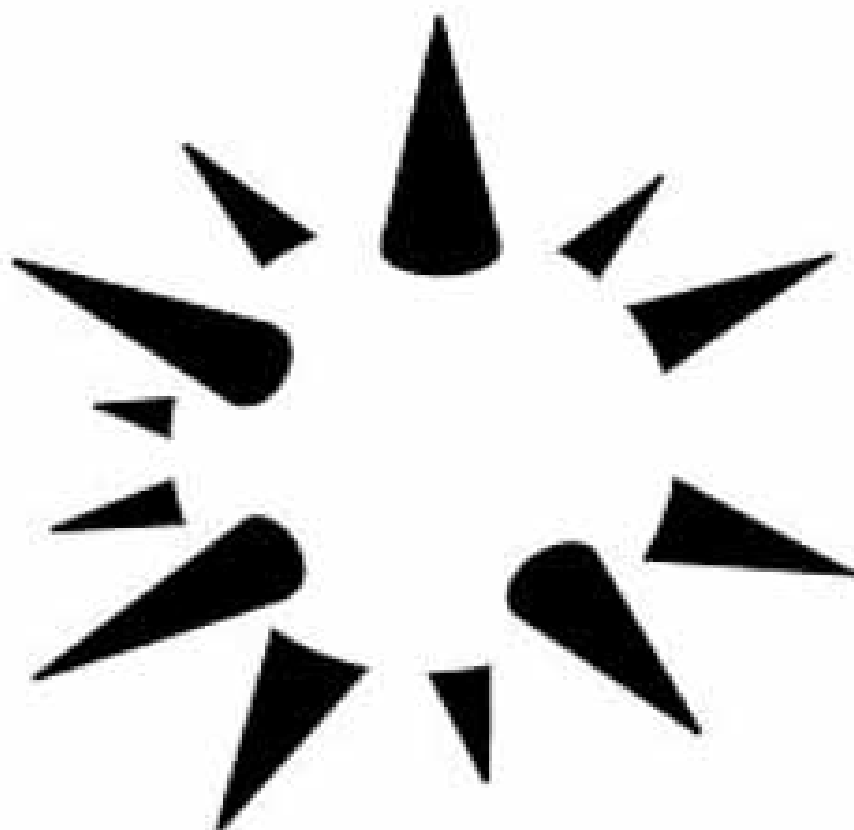
*Thinking is what a great many people think they are doing when they are merely rearranging their prejudices.*

*~William James*

# COGNITIVE “GAPS”

The Gestalt Theory of Mental Perception suggests that our brains always attempt to make sense of what we see and hear to the point of imagination

- Even when we have significantly less information than is required to draw a conclusion, our brains naturally try to connect the limited parts of what is available into a larger more coherent understanding or perception.



# COGNITIVE “GAPS”

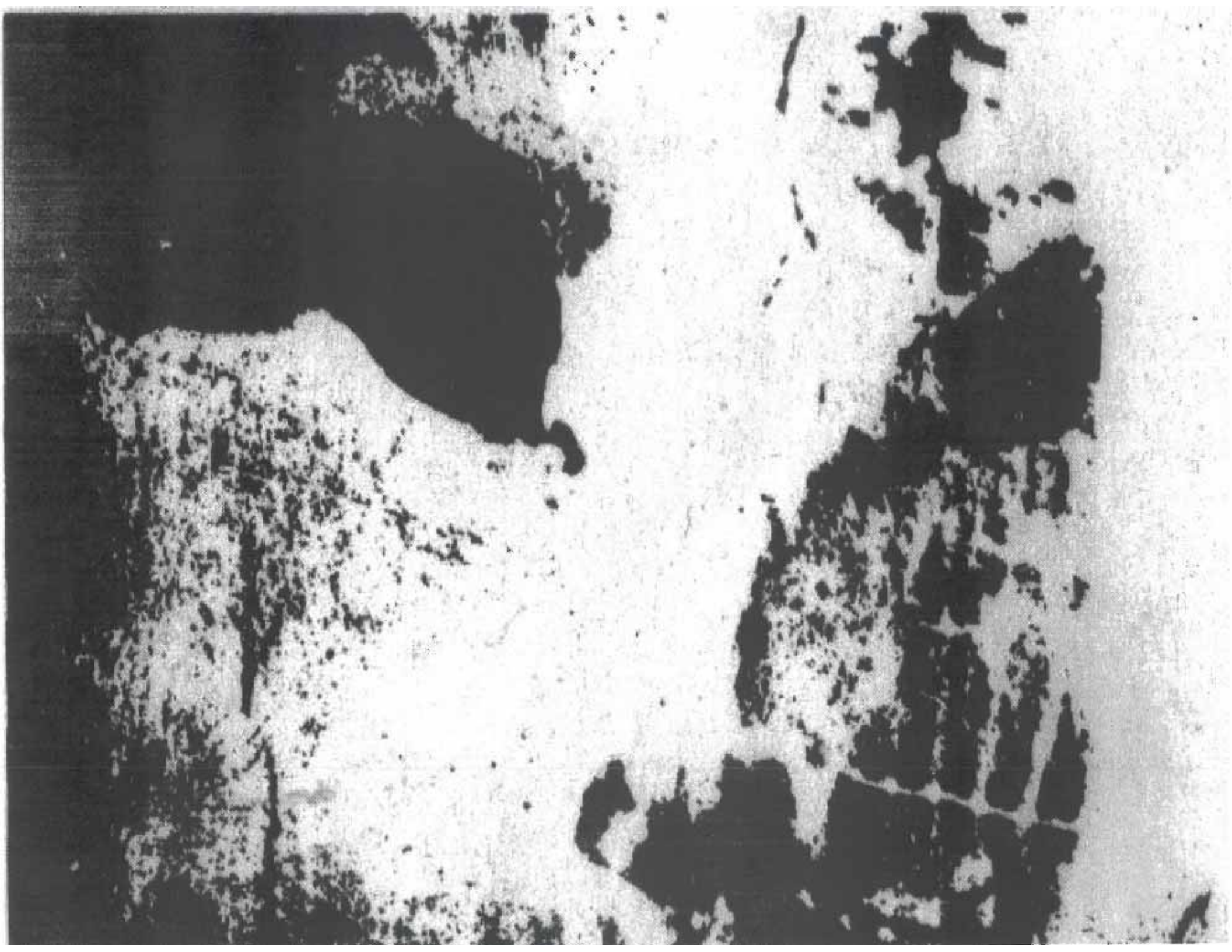
The Gestalt Theory also shows that  
how information is presented will  
determine our perception





# ENTRENCHED INFORMATION

- Once we are “set” on an idea or perspective, is it more difficult to be moved off that position, and if so, why?
  - Bias
  - Conceit
  - Sign of weakness
  - Posturing



# ENTRENCHED INFORMATION

- How might our own “entrenched” positions adversely affect the process of critical thinking?
- How might this issue impact effective communication?



# TAKEAWAYS....

- Think about what biases you may have...
- Leave room for being wrong...
- Hold yourself intellectually accountable...
- Consider that everyone brings unique qualities to the table that you can draw from...
- Recognize what mental “entrenchments” you may have...
- Consider how agendas, bias, and subjectivity drive how information is presented

# **WHAT ROLE DOES “AUTHORITY” PLAY IN CRITICAL THINKING?**

One of the more interesting studies involved research  
looking into how authority might affect  
the process of individual decision making...

# Milgram Experiment

# **“AUTHORITY” AND THE IMPACT TO CRITICAL THINKING AND EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION**

For military professionals,  
authority is inherent to our operations...

...how might our use of authority  
affect our subordinates ability to be effective  
critical thinkers...independent thinkers?



# COMMUNICATING OPERATIONAL DIRECTIVES...

Are there systematic considerations  
for communicating our directives to subordinates?

*(Star)*

1. Acknowledge that not everyone will be on board at the same speed
2. Align to a common perspective
3. Build on a common reference point
4. Provide clear, path-specific directions
5. Be Patient

# MENTAL COGNITION / RECALL

- What causes us to remember some things and not others?
  - (10 to 20 random items test)
- When presenting an issue that requires a clear understanding, how might this truth regarding mental cognition play a part?
- How might we take this truth into account when we are trying to coordinate/influence a decision process?

## The power of Analogies

# DEVELOP AN ENVIRONMENT OF CRITICAL THINKING AND EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

- Catch them in the act of doing something right!
- Treat everyone as a 10...people will rise or fall to expectations
- Give them “string” and “bread crumbs” in order to facilitate self-discovery
- Engineer systematic problem solving...
- Break big problem rocks into smaller rocks



# TAKEAWAYS....

- Think about how your authority might affect your subordinates' critical thinking...
- Military authority can be negative or positive to the thinking process of our troops...use it responsibly
- How might you use systematic process in getting your folks to think and plan in a new direction?
- Effective communicators draw upon shared experiences and provide directives in the form of narratives



# **TURNING THIS ALL INTO ACTION**

- **Start by thinking how you can influence your folks' commitment to the overall mission and Air Force...on and off duty**
- **Young enlisted may require different leadership than young officers...take their demographics into account**
- **Be creative, systematic, and consider how some of the material this course has offered might help shape your initiatives**
- **Once you have a plan for something new, go for it! Do not wait for a mandate or an official AF program...**
- **Empower your folks with this information...get your unit leaders on board with your vision**
- **Be patient, have a long-view perspective**
- **Finally, share what works with your fellow leaders**

# SOME IDEAS...

- Three slides
- Heritage translation
- E1-E3 offsite
- 01-02 offsite
- CGO and NCO Cross-talk
- Book a month
- Anonymous feedback opportunity
- Wingman sorties (both ways)
- CC Call Planning to each section
- Instructor PD program
- Oath

# POINTS TO PONDER...

- We are responsible for human development
- Mentoring starts with understanding their story
- Mistakes are opportunities
- Help them set personal goals
- Balance people and mission



# OUR TASK...

As a leader, your #1 job is to bring out the best version of people intellectually, physically, and emotionally...

...this is, and will remain, the single most important requirement for effective USAF mission accomplishment.



## Challenging the way we think!

- Using organic leadership skills
- Recognizing personal bias
- Providing effective communication

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**QUESTIONS/  
COMMENTS**